

The Diodes

Here are four individuals that started the Toronto punk scene from ground zero. When they couldn't find a club they turned their rehearsal space into Canada's first punk rock club. They were also the first Canadian punk band to sign an international record deal and release four brilliant albums and had a handful of great singles. I'd like to welcome Ian Mackay, John Hamilton, Paul Robinson, and John Catto, otherwise known as the Diodes.

Interview conducted by Greg Dick

Photos by Ralph Alfonso

MRR: Where are you all from originally?

John H: I'm from Toronto. Born and raised. Grew up in Scarborough.

Ian: I started in Sarnia.

John C: Born in Birmingham. Moved to Canada in '67. Been here ever since and back to London.

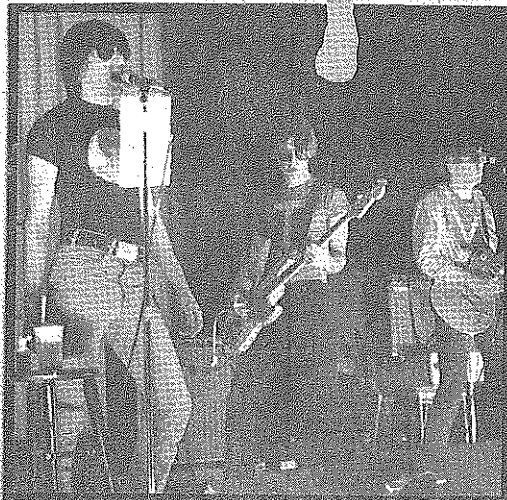
Paul: I was born in Boston. Then moved to Montreal and then Toronto in 1976.

MRR: So, you guys came from all different corners. Before the Diodes formed, what kind of music were you guys into back in your early teens, before punk started and the whole O.C.A. thing?

John C: The dates here, we're talking the early '70s—1972, 1973. I was listening to, initially, things like the first Stooges album, Bowie, T-Rex, Mott The Hoople, Queen, all of that. A glam rock kid.

MRR: There was a lot of that kind of stuff going on around then. It was really great. Did you guys go and see a lot of those bands?

John C: I saw everyone who came through Toronto at that time. I saw the Dolls. There was a bunch of different venues. Most things then would be either at Massey Hall or the Victoria Burlesque Theatre down at Spadina and Dundas. So, Massey Hall I saw T-Rex there, I saw Lou Reed there, I saw Mott The Hoople there, I saw Sparks. At the Victoria Burlesque Theatre, I saw the Stooges, the New York Dolls, Silverhead, Rush's first gig. They opened up for the New York Dolls.



MRR: And how did the crowd respond to Rush that night? That's two different ends of the spectrum, there.

John C: Roughly speaking, they were sort of a Led Zeppelin band then. This was early on in the day of things, so I don't think people acted as negatively as you might think they did. Not as negatively as they reacted to seeing Kansas open up for Mott The Hoople.

MRR: So were you dressing the part? Did you have the Master John boots and the whole glam rock thing... the haircut?

John C: Yeah. Well, I didn't have any Master John stuff, but I bought everything from Long John's, which was John Gibson's old shop up on Yonge Street. Lots of English rock 'n' roll clothes—the hand made shoes...

MRR: And tell me about Long John. We've had a few people come on the show who had forgotten the name and didn't really remember a lot about the store. I heard that was a place where you could basically go full tilt and get your velvet jackets and your flares, etc. And I heard they shared the same space as Master John.

John C: Master John was across the street. Master John was over in the building on the upper end of Yonge Street. Long John's was on a little side street. It had a big cartoon of a pirate painted on the wall. It was run by John Gibb, but it was Chris Gibb, who was his cousin, who ended up in the Deserfers and John Gibb was in the Battered Wives. They brought a lot of stuff over from England. They had shoes made here and it was proper Faces-style rock 'n' roll pirate shoes with the little heel. I think they got clothes from Paradise Garage, maybe Phenix Casara in England, you know. They had the mothball and Ty jackets. And I guess they knocked off a certain amount of stuff.

MRR: And Paul, you were in Boston at this time. Was there a similar scene going on there?

Paul: I was already in Montreal when everything really broke. Well alright, I'll go back to Boston. The first band I saw in '72, in Boston, was the Dolls and there was an interesting thing that

happened in Boston with a lot of new bands coming and just started to invent themselves. People like Jonathan Richman. People like Willie "Boom Boom" Alexander. And a lot of bands were coming through Boston at the time there was quite a good club scene.

MRR: Yes. And you must have seen the Real Kids.

Paul: I saw them but they were later. They were contemporaries of the Diodes. They weren't around when I was in high school. AERO-SMITH was around in high school. Bands like that.



Being interviewed by Wendy O Williams
@ Max's Kansas City, NY 1977

MRR: Did you see Aerosmith back then?

Paul: I did. They actually played at my high school. They played a school dance.

John C: Don't you have a story about that, about hitch hiking?

Paul: Yeah. I was hitch hiking in Boston and this band picked us up. They said, "hey we're in this band called Aerosmith." And I had seen them at high school and I was like, "Oh God, that band?" They were just uncool because this was at the time of the New York Dolls, and look at what happened to them.

John H: Where did Cyrinda Fox end up?

MRR: Yeah, Cyrinda Fox would have been hanging around with them for sure. You must have been aware of the presence of J Geils and bands like that. Thunder Train.

Paul: J Geils was the biggest band in Boston at the time.

John H: You're forgetting Foghat.

MRR: I thought Foghat were from England?

John C: They are English, yeah, but they were always on Don Kirshner's Rock Concert.

Paul: Yeah, but the Boston bands... Definitely J Geils were the biggest.

MRR: And Paul, why did you originally choose Montreal to study before coming to Toronto?

Paul: You want the real answer for this?

MRR: I do.

Paul: The Vietnam War. The bottom line is that I was 19 when they were drafting people into the Vietnam War and my parents thought it was a good idea that I moved up to Canada, which is why I went to Concordia University.

MRR: That is a good reason. Why did you eventually leave Montreal and then come to Toronto?

Paul: I finished university at Concordia and I came to graduate school at York University.

MRR: Did you ever see the band DMZ from Boston?

Paul: Yeah, sure, but they were later. Again, they were contemporaries of the Real Kids.

MRR: What bands were you guys in before the Diodes?

Paul: I think John Hamilton is the only one that can speak here.

John H: Well, I started quite young actually. I am a bit older than the other guys in the band by about four or five years. I started playing in bands regularly about 1966 when there was a non-union scene and I was in high school. We worked every weekend. I had a little R&B band called Sermon, and we were under the influence of The Rogues, which later evolved into Mandala. At that point there was a really interesting... what was called "race radio" station out of Buffalo, called WAFL, which played black music. Very obscure singles like Dyke and the Blazers, and people like that so there was a very strong R&B influence in Toronto at that point. So, I was playing around in those kinds of bands in high school every weekend, picking up, actually, not bad money—I don't know, \$30 or \$40 every weekend. I was doing that for about ten years before I joined the Diodes.

MRR: And you were playing drums?

John H: Yes. I was playing drums then.

MRR: And you were also in a band called

Zoom. Can you tell me about Zoom?

John H: Zoom was with Chris Hate, who eventually became the bass player in the Viletones. Chris and I had grown up together. He was the other guy in all the bands that I was playing in back around 1966. We had been playing together and breaking up, and playing together and breaking up over the years, numerous times, and Zoom sort of came together somewhat under the influence of The Ramones. We were like the tail end of a glam band, but with a bit of a punk influence. Actually, I think we released the first independent single in Toronto.

MRR: And that was "Sweet Desperation."

John H: Yeah, and "Massacre at Central High," but Chris Hate and I both realized that that band was really not the right mix, so we re-shaped ourselves and Chris joined the Viletones and I joined the Diodes, and I think it was the best move that either of us ever made.

MRR: And what year did that single come out?

John H: That probably would have been the tail end of '76 or the really early part of '77.

MRR: Did you guys press a lot of copies?

John H: I think we pressed 1,000. That was all that was ever pressed.

MRR: My understanding of the earliest version of the Diodes stems from the bands the Country Lads and the Eels. Can you tell me about this band?

Ian: I can tell you about the Eels. The Eels were comprised of David Clarkson, Harry Palm who went on to do the G-Rays. I was the soundman and Bent Rasmussen was the drummer—a concept band really. The idea behind the Eels, originally, was to take a pop element like a rock band and create a sound sculpture wall-of-noise product. That's what we were actually trying to accomplish.

Paul: That's not pretentious, is it Ian?

Ian: Absolutely pretentious. So we ended up liking the music so much that the concept quickly fell away and we just enjoyed seeing the guys performing up on stage.

MRR: Did they do a lot of gigs?

Ian: One gig.

MRR: That was it and you were the manager.

Ian: I was the soundman, manager, production assistant, roadie... and I had a nice blue fluffer—a really nice blue polyester suit to go with it.

MRR: Harry was the singer in that band and

he went on to play in the G-Rays and I heard he wore the Marilyn Monroe T-shirt with the cut off sleeves for that show. Now you and Harry had a house down by Trinity Bellwoods Park, what did you nickname the place?

Ian: Well, it was Art's photo studio, and what we started with Dave Clarkson, was a little scene called Radiation Ranch, and we bought stamps and stamped everything we did... all the lyric sheets we wrote. We walked around Queen Street wearing red Furshingler gloves. That's all we would wear. It was quite silly really. It was a pure concept idea. We wanted to have a pop idea. Listening to The Ramones, having a great time playing music, and then we ran into these guys and things changed.

MRR: Now the Country Lads, that was Bob Rogers, Carl Finkel, and Johnny McCloud. I guess after that gig, at some point Johnny met Harry at O.C.A. around '76 and formed

John C: It lasted from October until

Ian: April of '77.

John C: Yeah, because we played the Colonial with that line up. We played the Beaux Arts Ball. We played the 3-D show...

MRR: So that was the Diodes then?

Paul: We were called the Diodes instantly. As of October '76 we were called the Diodes.

John H: And you all had funny names like Laser Burns and stuff.

Paul: Paul Are.

Ian: Who was Laser Buns? John?

John C: That was me.

Paul: What was David Clarkson? Yeah, we did have funny names. There was like a fanzine that we had put together.

John C: He was called, like, Teddy Buys or something.

MRR: And so at this point you guys were all in O.C.A. Rodney Bowes the photographer was responsible for coming up with the name.

Ian: Rodney and I went to high school together. Rodney introduced me to J-Rex and Slade. He was from the UK, so he was a very positive influence on me. Not to mention the trouble we got in. Rodney followed me to O.C.A. and we were good buddies at that time and he was the one who coined the name.

MRR: At what point did John enter the band, and how did you meet John Hamilton?

Ian: We met John through Bent and John could probably tell that story better.

John H: Bent had been my drummer, actually, when I was at the *Daily Planet* at the Beverley from '74 to '76, and I was in Zoom, and Zoom was booking the Colonial Underground, so I had seen the Diodes play. And actually, Steven Davey from the Dishes had been the initial contact. They phoned me up and said that the Diodes were looking for a drummer.

John C: Yeah, but I think we had met you lots of times before that.

John H: Yeah. We had sort of seen each other around.

John C: I can remember going to a Viletones rehearsal with you way before you were in the band.

John H: Right. That's probably true because we were banging out with the Viletones in an earlier incarnation.

MRR: And tell me about John Corvette.

John C: John was married to Martha Johnson, who eventually ended up in Martha and the Muffins. Back in the early days, this punk period of O.C.A., things would go on at O.C.A. where one of a variety of bands would do stuff. They were most-

ly art kind of bands. There was a band called Oh Those Pants. There was the Doncasters. John Corvette was a part of all those things. All of these people were not from O.C.A. None of them went there. For some reason, they had some link there. I think it was Owen wasn't it?

Ian: Yeah. At the Ontario College of Art, there was a whole Thornhill contingent attending and they had friends who came and played.

John C: For some reason all their friends got these gigs.

Ian: They got these gigs. They probably controlled S.A.C.

John C: They did the thing the year before we did. We were in control. Whoever that Thornhill link was, had got all their bands in so there was Oh Those Pants. There was the Doncasters, and so on and so forth.

Ian: And John McCloud was associated with that crowd. So he might have been the link because he was already downtown doing his country thing.

John H: John Corvette and I auditioned the same night for you guys right? He was brand new back then. They just lost David Clarkson and Bent had just left. John Corvette and I came down to the CEAC (Centre For Experimental Arts and Communication), which would become the Crash 'n' Burn, and we auditioned that night.

MRR: So, John Corvette would have been in the Diodes before the Cads?

Ian: Yeah.

MRR: Now Ian and John Catto, and I guess, John Hamilton, you guys met Paul at a party. Can you tell me about this? Is this the first time you had met him?

Ian: That is a bit of a mixed memory because we were comparing it the other day. My memory is that Paul was doing his graduate work at York University and had brought Anthony Karow to speak at O.C.A. and I met him after that. Another memory is that we met at one of John Catto's openings. The link up was at one of John Catto's openings. The link up was art related, but more importantly, somebody was blasting Ramones out of some kind of a tape player. I think it was Paul and so we ran up to him and said "You're the only person we've met so far who actually knows about this band and isn't this so cool." Instantly this created a sort of blood relation right away. A soulmate.

MRR: So he was carrying a boom box with him?

Paul: My Norelco boom box.

John C: I should mention that, despite the fact that this might have been at my painting show, I didn't really meet Paul then. I actual-

the G-Rays. This would have been the time when John Catto and Paul Robinson formed a band with Bent Rasmussen and Dave Clarkson, would that have been the Diodes, or was that a different band?

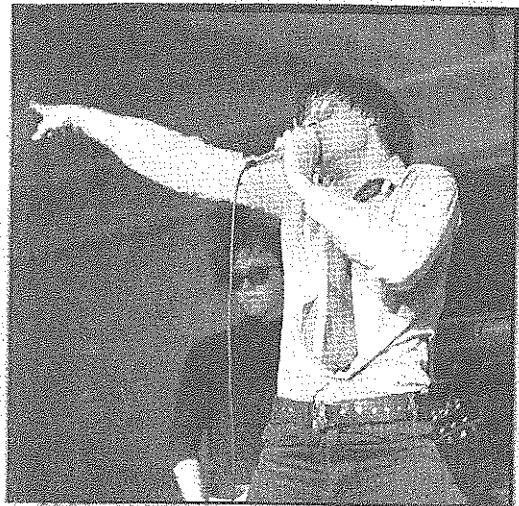
Ian: We didn't really have a name.

Paul: No, no, no. I think, basically, Ian certainly became a part of that band immediately. Ian and Dave Clarkson approached me to be their singer.

MRR: How long did this incarnation last?

John C: Was this the one with David Clarkson and Bent?

Ian: For about four months.



ly met him at a rehearsal when they were falling apart.

Paul: I think what Ian mentioned is probably right. That I met Ian and Dave Clarkson at a talk for Anthony Karow, which I went to, and I think it was Ian that invited me to this art opening which happened to be George Whiteside and John Catto's art opening. And it was either that night or the following night and I went to the party and that's where I brought the Ramones thing on my Norelco cassette player, which was the prototype of a cassette player. I was playing The Ramones walking around and I guess everyone thought that was the coolest thing they had ever seen and that's why I was invited into the band.

MRR: And George Whiteside went on to become a famous fashion photographer and he actually did the photography on your third LP. Speaking of photography, can you tell me about Carol Starr?

Paul: Carol Star was my girlfriend. Carol was another student at York University when I was in graduate school and I kind of introduced her to the whole scene and then she ended up leaving Toronto right after the Crash 'n' Burn and she moved to England and was Phil Lynott's girlfriend, basically.

MRR: Were any of you present that evening when the incident occurred with Mike Nightmare? I've heard variations. I've heard that Mike was basically taken out because Phil had a bodyguard.

Paul: Mike, who was Irish, went up to him and said "How are you doing, you Irish git?" or some comment, and Phil took it the wrong way and felt he was making an anti-Irish comment and completely pounded the guy.

MRR: And Mike Nightmare's real last name was Mulroney, so he was a true Irishman. Where and when did you guys meet Ralph Alfonso?

Paul: I'm the one who met Ralph originally.

Ian: It was around the Crash 'n' Burn.

John C: It was before the Crash 'n' Burn. It was either at the first Viletones gig, I think, or maybe at O.C.A. before that.

Paul: He got my telephone number at one of the gigs and rang me. He was trying to do an article or something because he was a journalist right? So he was writing an article. He rang me up and I ended up talking to him for hours on the phone, and at that point, I convinced him to be our manager and about coming down to our rehearsal space.

Ian: I remember Ralph being there way early photographing us a lot saying "No, that's not right. Do that button up. Take that off."

MRR: While attending O.C.A. there were

school trips to New York City. What do you remember of these excursions? Was it all about educating yourselves in the art gallery, or was there extra curricular activities going on?

Paul: I'll tell it because it's my favorite Ian story.

John C: I'll do the lead in.

Ian: You could still be sued for that window, so be careful of what you say.

Paul: I don't think they can sue you after 30 years.

John C: This would be the second of the O.C.A. trips that I went on. Paul, by this point had appeared at O.C.A. and was hanging around and he smuggled himself onto the bus. He fucked himself up on the baggage rack.

Ian: I think that was Harri we smuggled, because Harri didn't have any money.

John C: Well, it was only O.C.A. students, so Paul was definitely smuggled.

Ian: Paul enjoyed a comfortable seat, so, I'm pretty sure he managed to get on but he might have been smuggled down with a US passport.

John C: So, Paul arrives in New York twelve hours later, this is 1976.

Ian: One thing we did do is we went to CBGB's and we saw the most amazing concert by Television I have ever seen in my life. I was just amazed by the band.

Paul: This is an incredible story. Not to mention we had our original demo tape already, produced by Mark Gain, and we were touting that around New York. God knows what reason John and I approached Danny Fields with it at his flat and we played it for him and we gave him our original fanzine. By the way, Danny Fields is the original manager of the Ramones.

MRR: ...and the STOOGES.

Paul: ...and the Doors.

John C: Having said that, I met Danny Fields in '76 when Rob and I went to interview The Ramones. Rob Sikora and I did a magazine at O.C.A. and we interviewed the Ramones for that. We interviewed Danny Fields as well. He was there at the gig at the New Yorker.

Paul: This is how we got to Danny Fields's apartment. There is no doubt about that.

MRR: That could have been a dangerous place to be.

Paul: It could have been, but it wasn't. You mean for 19-year-old boys? It was a non-starter. We met the people from Rock Scene Magazine.

MRR: Lisa Robinson and Richard Robinson.

Paul: Then we ended up, Ian, John, and I, with Danny Fields and Bob Resnick and Lisa

Robinson and Seymour Stein. We ended up having dinner with them at a place called the Ocean Club. We were at the Ocean Club and there was a band on called the Feelies and we are sitting at a table with John Cale, and for some reason, John Cale just had a go at me. I mean, the guy just devastated me. I told him that I love all the things that he has done and he was just on my case. It was just unbelievable.

MRR: John was known to have a few too many drinks. Did anything ever transpire from knowing Danny Fields?

Paul: I think we eventually ended up in Rock Scene.

John C: That was nothing to do with the Danny Fields thing, but you haven't told the actual story that you started leading in here.

Paul: What was it? You can finish it.

John C: Actually, I wasn't there.

Paul: Oh right. Ian got completely pissed, he was so drunk, legless-ly drunk. We ended up walking around Soho on West Broadway and we are looking at all the art galleries—there weren't that many art galleries at the time just a handful of them—but there was the Leo Castelli gallery, which was one of the major galleries of pop art. I mean, he was Warhol's dealer and Lichtenstein's dealer and Robert Rauschenberg's dealer. Ian looked at it and went, "Fuck art. Fuck art." And then picked up a brick and threw it through the window of the Leo Castelli gallery. Then picked up another one and threw it through the window at the Sodenburgh gallery, which was the gallery next door. And we're just going "Ian, what are you doing?" And he's just going "Fuck art."

Ian: Actually, Paul was cheering me on the whole time and before we did that we actually went into a number of clubs and Paul and I were chanting "Fuck art" into the clubs and people were looking at us, wondering, "what are you saying?" I guess at that point we decided we weren't going to be artists. We were going to be musicians instead. After that I had an exhibition about that where I projected a brick through a piece of glass at my spring exhibition and had a cassette player where you'd hear a brick smash glass and John Massey thought it was one of the most brilliant pieces that I had done, but what an inspiration to get there.

Paul: I think it was a great work of art, but even better, this is obscure and a bit away from punk rock, but the next day we went back down to see the damage done and they had boarded up the window of the Castelli gallery and they had used a Robert Rauschenberg crate and it was signed and I thought that was so appropriate. Boarded up the hole with the Roschenburg design.

MRR: "Fuck art" turned into art.

Paul: But "Fuck art" was the end of us being artists.

MRR: And the beginning of you guys starting to play gigs? What was the first gig the Diodes ever played?

John C: That would be the Talking Heads at O.C.A. At that point we had been rehearsing for a couple of months and my friend John Armstrong was the head of the student booking committee. I can't remember the exact title. In fact, he had run for everything that no one could be bothered to do, but John had gone through these things and so he booked. We said that we should get a gig and see that the Talking Heads are playing A Space, which is like a small art gallery.

MRR: So that wasn't part of O.C.A.?

John C: Not connected at all.

Ian: A Space was up at Yonge and Bloor.

John C: It was a really little gallery. We got in touch with their management and we've got this thing, there is a big hall and an art college, they'll love you, all this stuff. We'll set it all up. We'll pay you money. They said "Yeah, great." So the Talking Heads came down and played A Space and then the next night they played O.C.A. and that was our first gig because we booked them so we had somewhere to play.

MRR: Paul, you told Johnny Black of CBS in 1978, "My sister was a hippie. I was too young for that. A couple of months after we formed, we started reading about the new English bands the Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Damned... I always thought like I do." This was probably reflective of the time of your first gigs and I guess the scene was pretty small at the time. You started realizing that there was more happening in other places.

Paul: Could you repeat the question?

MRR: At some point you must have felt a little alienated being a part of a punk band when you started realizing that there were bands coming out of other major cities. You realized that you weren't the only person that was into this kind of stuff.

Paul: I think that the Diodes were very aware of everything that was around them and very aware of the context that they belonged to. We were never a contrived band. We were always interested in what was going on at the same time.

MRR: Were you guys more inspired by American music or British music?

Ian: I think it was a combination of both. Let's not forget that John Hamilton had already had six or seven years of Canadian

music experience. John Catto had experience going down and seeing bands and looking at what was going on, so we brought a lot of Canadian elements to it. I think some of the source and inspiration came from New York and London. We thought Canada was an interesting place to be because we were melding both experiences together. A lot of the bands had dual influences, whereas those countries had their own scenes.

Paul: You've got to also put into the context of what was out there for us to hear. So when the Diodes formed, the albums that were out there... there was Patti Smith's first album, there was the Ramones' first album, later on by the autumn "Anarchy in the UK" had come out. There were a couple of singles filtering through. Generation X. The Damned.

John C: The Damned was the first English single to do anything.

MRR: I think they also put out the first full length with *Damned Damned Damned*. Did you guys get hassled much for looking different from the average Torontonians back then?

Paul: People used to constantly yell at me as I walked down the road "Hey, Elvis," because that is what they thought a black leather jacket and a guy with spikey quaffed hair was supposed to be into.

John C: I lived in Etobicoke so I got lots of it. I would be on the bus going home late at night and it would get very strange.

MRR: Tell me about the 3-D show on February 18th, 1977 with the Diodes, the Doncasters, and the Dishes.

John C: Well that's our second gig.

Paul: I think it was the Dishes, the Diodes, and the Doncasters, because the Dishes headlined it.

John C: Diodes, Dishes, Doncasters.

Paul: No, Dishes, Diodes, Doncasters.

John C: In order of appearance, yeah. The Dishes definitely headlined it. It was Steven Davey's idea. We would control the booking at this point at O.C.A. and the Dishes wanted to play there. Steven said, "Oh, wouldn't it be fun to do a gig where every band has the same first initial?" Yeah, that will do. We need another gig."

Paul: I think in between there was a gig that the Dishes did at the Roxy Cinema.

John C: That's right. Was that in between?

Paul: I think it was because they played the gig where the opening act was the film *West Side Story* and the Dishes came out and I think *West Side Story* was still being projected over them whilst they played the gig.

John C: To be honest, I think that's later. I think that happened around the *Crash 'n' Burn*.

Paul: No. I think it's before then. The Viletones were there because I remember Ian and I running down the road and the Viletones having this pretend fight in the middle of the road.

MRR: Did you guys know Anya Varda at O.C.A.?

Ian: I think we met her at the Peter Pan.

Paul: Where did you meet Anya? We knew her from the St. Charles when she was a fag hag. That's where I first saw her.

MRR: Yeah, she was around a lot back then. When the Dishes would sing "Farrah no" she would be the one up on stage.

Paul: That was later though. I mean we met Anya way back. Lucasta and Xenia, and all of those girls that hung around the pre-punk glam scene.

John C: All of them were around the first gigs that we did and they were all around at the Stooges gig and the New York Dolls gig that I saw earlier—the '72-'73 gigs. Lucasta was there. Xenia was there. Anya was there. Deborah Cadabra was there. They were all there. That was a big link. It was all the same people.

Paul: The song "Plastic Girls" we wrote for them.

John C: Well, for Lucasta actually. Did you know that?

Ian: "They don't brave daylight unmade up. They have forgotten their own names for today. Their vinyl clothes are hot, but they don't care. They don't care because they are just part of the scene and I need that new breed of girl." Great lyrics, John.

Paul: Yup. That's a winner.

MRR: Tell me about finding your rehearsal space on Duncan Street.

Ian: At the end of our third year at the Ontario College of Art we had a loose association with the Centre for Experimental Art and Communication, which had the top floor and the basement floor at the building on Duncan and Pearl. We were able to use the space to prepare for our final performance video art show critiques of the year and stage an exhibition there and David Clarkson did a few video pieces. I did a few video pieces. We did a performance together. And Harri Palm had his stuff there. And shortly after that we saw that the basement space was available. I think at the same time we were being kicked out or evicted from the Brink's Building in the Annex, so, at that point it was John Hamilton who suggested, "This would be a great space to rehearse," and so we started to rehearse.

John C: I think there is a much shorter version of this that the CEAC people effectively contacted. I think the links are through

David, and they contacted us saying "we would like you to come along and do a live performance art thing." The Curse was already around at this point because they were around and we got up and it was just like the *Raw War* single. We got up and it was the dialectic of the proletariats, blah, blah, 1234 bery, bery, bery. Mickey Skin comes in going "You suck. Fuck you." Ian: Mickey could swear very well. He knew every profanity in the world and he would keep ralling with them.

Paul: Yeah, but I did the "12345" so I was on it too.

John C: So this is in London? We went up and did this show and in trade for that we said, "could we rehearse in your basement?" and they said, "Yes." So we go into the basement. Most of the crew from CEAC go overseas to all these things.

Paul: The Venice Biennale. I think. They went to the Venice Biennale and left the kids to look after the house, so, what do the kids do when they look after the house?

Ian: They throw a party.

Paul: The parents go away. We throw a party, which was the greatest party ever.

John C: And John sits there and says, "this would be a great place to put on a gig," and that was the end of it. Or the beginning.

Ian: So we did.

Paul: And boy did we ever.

John C: Just like Mickey Rooney.

Paul: The problem is the parents come home eventually, and when they came home, boy did they come home, because the whole place was mayhem.

MRR: And you guys played upstairs and downstairs in this building?

John H: We played once upstairs.

Paul: Did we?

John H: We played once up there with the hardwood floors.

Paul: I think it was a show, though. It wasn't a rehearsal.

John H: That was where one of the videos was filmed. An 8mm or something like that. That might have been the first gig I did with you guys.

John C: That's at the end. That's after isn't it? Or maybe we did it in London and then we did it upstairs there.

Ian: I'm right.

John C: Because that's the bit that's in the *Raw War* single.

MRR: And who thought of turning the space into a club?

Ian: It was John Hamilton. He was the entrepreneur.

Paul: He thought, "Hey we can make some money at this." You never gonna make money in a band so you might as well start a

club.

Ian: You could make more money as a club owner then we did as a band.

MRR: Who came up with the name Crash 'n' Burn?

Paul: This is one of those stories.

John C: ...a much-discussed thing.

Paul: I went to see the Viletones at the Colonial Underground and Steve Leckie always tried to wind me up. He said there's this band out there called Crash 'n' Burn. They are fantastic and all the record companies were trying to sign them, and because I was really vulnerable, and really gullible, and always believed everything everyone told me, I said, "Wow. There's a band out there called Crash 'n' Burn and all the record companies want to sign them. I want to hear them." I spent three days trying to find this band. I think I told Ralph or I told someone else the story and they said, "He's made it up. There is no band called Crash 'n' Burn." Someone else like John Catto said, "Yeah, it's a magazine," or something. Was there a magazine called *Crash 'n' Burn*, John?

John C: No, but it is a standard Air Force kind of expression.

MRR: There was a Crash 'n' Burn newsletter though.

John C: Yeah, but it was after the club.

Paul: We did our own newsletter.

Ian: We had a Gesterner press.

Paul: It was the Ralph paper.

MRR: John, I forgot to ask you, what was the name of the fanzine you and Rob Sikora had?

John C: *New Century Gazette*.

MRR: Was the sound good in the Crash 'n' Burn? Did you guys put together the P.A. yourselves?

John H: Yeah. It was actually a really good P.A. We used to get a couple of great big A7 bins from Westbury Sound. We had a very professional board not too different from the board being used here.

Ian: We had monitors and we used to go out to Canada Lighting and set them up for the weekend. We had a pretty reasonable set up. We would go to the LCBO to get our special occasions permit and load up the truck with beer and fill up the bathtub with ice.

John H: It was a week's worth of work to put on two days of shows.

MRR: Tell me about the staff.

Ian: The staff was us, plus our girlfriends and a few people that wanted to be involved.

John H: It's true. Xenia and Lucasta used to work the bar and all the other bands helped

build the club. I'll never forget seeing Lucasta in her high heels scrubbing the toilet. Her and Karen Smailes.

John C: Who was later Sally Cato.

MRR: She was from the Concordes and later the Androids and Smashed Palace.

John C: They were totally involved.

MRR: Who booked the bands?

Paul: I think we all had ideas of who we wanted to play there. I think it was very democratic and felt that all of the major Toronto bands should play there, even though in a lot of ways we weren't getting along so famously, but I insisted that the Viletones and Teenage Head, even though they bad mouthed me a lot, I still felt they should play there. So they got booked. The Poles got booked, primarily because they were around. They were one of the early bands. The Dishes got booked exactly for the same reason.

John H: The Curse. And there were some other bands. The Tools, and there were some other bands... the Dents.

John C: The Dents were always there so they had to play.

Paul: If it had continued everybody would have played there, because I was incredibly democratic. I just thought that everybody that was part of the scene should play there, whether I liked them or I didn't like them personally and that was part of the difference between, say, the Gary's, because the Gary's had a disliking for me and so the Diodes never played in any of the Gary's venues, which wasn't fair to these guys, but as soon as I was out of the band, John's individual project went and played at the Gary's and your individual projects always played there.

MRR: That probably answers the question why you never played the Last Pogo?

Paul: I was already living in New York during the Last Pogo. I had already left town.

MRR: That was during the hiatus between the first and second LP.

Paul: We got sacked from Columbia and I moved to New York, so there wasn't much chance that the Diodes were going to play at that stage, and John had left the band. It was a very transitional time.

MRR: Getting back to the Crash 'n' Burn, how did the out of town bands find out about the club like the Nerves, the Boyfriends, the Dead Boys?

John C: All of them different. The Nerves are linked to the genesis of the club. After we put it together we were building the bar and we were about a half a week from opening it

and there was quite a lot of preparation for it. Bob Segarini turned up and he goes...

Paul: We didn't know him, but Ralph did so we thought that was a Ralph connection and he said, "I have this band from California that would like to do a gig," and that was the Nerves. So we said, "Sure. They can open the club with us and the Diodes would support them."

John C: He was going, "They are half way across the country."

Ian: They showed up in their car with a little U-Haul trailer just dogging it out across the country.

John C: Bob Sampson sort of beige suits and Rickenbackers.

Paul: And Yves St. Laurent polyester suits. They must have sweat like pigs in those suits.

Ian: And vests and mink coats.

MRR: And Blondie did them a big favor by recording one of their songs, "Hanging on the Telephone."

John C: They sure did but you know their version is still the best version.

Ian: They were a good band, good harmony singers.

MRR: Did you ever turn anyone down who wanted to play the Crash 'n' Burn?

Paul: No.

MRR: So anyone could play there?

Ian: Can we tell the truth?

MRR: Did Goddo ever ask you to play there?

Paul: No.

Ian: We wouldn't let the Battered Wives play there because they had a song called "Lover's Balls" and we went to see them at the Colonial Underground and we thought they were vulgar. They were coarse and vulgar lager louts right?

Paul: I think the other thing was the Long John guy, John Gibb. I don't know what I did but he tried to beat the shit out of me.

John C: Paul, I'm gonna stop you before you do this. It wasn't John Gibb. John Gibb was not the one. You're talking about the first version of the band, which had Toby.

Paul: Who I liked.

Ian: Toby was a cool guy.

John C: The only person from the Battered Wives that you would know is Toby. That's it. Toby. The guy who ended up playing bass in the Government. Not Andy, but the other guy, and an English drummer called Colin Fox.

Paul: That's it, Colin. He's the one that nearly murdered me.

Ian: Yeah. He was an awful person, actually.

John C: Colin Fox lept off the stage and actually, I thought he attacked Ian.

Paul: No he attacked me. Ian probably stepped in and helped me out of the situation.

John C: Funny enough, I ran into Colin Fox fourteen years ago in London. In fact at that point he had played on Jeremy Gluck's solo album, you know the guy from the Barracudas.

MRR: Who you guys later played with? Did you guys recognize the crowd at the Crash 'n' Burn, or were they people you had never seen before?

Ian: It changed. That's for sure. It started with familiar faces but the line ups got longer and longer and longer and people were coming from all over the place.

MRR: And the Diodes did double as janitors for the Crash 'n' Burn. That must have been interesting cleaning it up.

John H: It took the whole of Sunday with mops and brooms and pails, and with 2,000 square feet, picking up all the paper cups and god only knows what else.

MRR: Did anyone ever leave their drugs behind?

John H: There weren't many drugs around at that point. Smoking marijuana was verboten at that time because that is what the hippies did and there was a little of what they called green snot speed which people used to take a little bit of, but there was mostly beer and a little bit of speed. A very mild kind of speed, sort of like the Beatles in Hamburg.

John C: Was there any crystal floating around then? Or was that when I was in high school?

Ian: There weren't a lot of drugs back then.

Paul: It wasn't drug fuelled.

John H: I mean people took speed to stay up all night and drink more beer, but it wasn't like they were strung out on it. They just took a little bit of something. They took some pills that had a little bit of caffeine in them like the Red Bull drinks now.

MRR: Now you guys put out a newsletter called the Crash 'n' Burn News and the biggest one I saw was four pages. I think a couple of them were two pages.

Ian: No it was longer than that. I've got a few of the issues. They are eight to ten pages.

MRR: Did you sell them or just hand them away?

Ian: Handed them out.

John H: We were doing this on the photocopiers at CEAC, doing a couple of hundred issues.

Paul: Whilst the parents were away.

John H: Using all their paper. Wearing out

all the cartridges on their photocopiers.

Paul: Come on, it was like a Xerox machine. It was probably five cents a page. We were just printing them off. Charging them to Canada Council.

MRR: Now the club lasted about six weekends. The final show was on August 12th, 1977 with yourselves and the Dead Boys. Why did the club close down?

Paul: The parents came home. So, basically what happened is they came home and went. First of all, there were complaints from the main tenant in the building. The main tenants in the building were the Liberal Party of Ontario and they were already suffering in the election. They were definitely down in the polls and that was their headquarters.

Ian: It did come out in the press that there was punk music in the basement of the Liberal Party headquarters and it came out as a scandalous thing. It was the Toronto Sun that first did this and somebody in the Liberal Party took great umbrage with the fact that this was being reported and I'm sure there are records somewhere about the correspondence between AGO and CEAC.

Paul: Basically, some spin doctor decided that this was really not a good marriage to have a punk club in the basement and we were also saying things like "Maggie Trudeau was down here every night."

John H: She might have been there. There was someone that looked like her.

MRR: I think she was hanging around Ron Wood wasn't she.

Paul: Yeah, well that's around the same time isn't it? We were spinning our own myth even in those days. We were saying Maggie Trudeau was down there. It did make it in to some of the press that there was this punk club in the basement of the Liberal Party of Ontario. The Sun saying "Those nasty punks. Those filthy punks." So they did not want us there. They were the main tenants of the building and basically the parents came home from Venice Biennale and they said, "Those are our tenants. You are going to have to leave."

John C: I think the be all and end all of the thing is that the complaint letters started to filter in right about the time that they all returned from Europe. They came back to a little pile of letters saying "It has come to our attention that your premises is infringing on our noise regulations," and so on.

Paul: Yeah, it was as simple as that and also the famous story of some complete idiot that was out on day leave who kicked in the front doors upstairs. They smashed the door into the main office building which was upstairs. There were cans strewn all over the road.

Our bun fight was the great bun fight of '77.

MRR: Do you feel the Crash 'n' Burn kick-started the scene?

Ian: I think it did.

John H: It certainly was the first club in Toronto that wasn't full of seats and tables where you were supposed to sit there all night and just drink beer. We had no place to sit down except for a couple of crude benches if you were ready to collapse and that was the whole idea. I mean prior to the Crash 'n' Burn there were clubs supposedly for young people that would just have tables and you have to sit there. If they bothered to have a dance floor, it was the usual postage stamp size. You weren't to get out of your chair with a drink so they were very restrictive, but ours was a lot freer and you could actually meet people. When you go to these old clubs and you could never meet anybody at the table four seats over. People circulated in the Crash 'n' Burn.

Paul: We were down there today looking at it and remembering things. You know, it has to be pointed out that we legitimately opened a legal space that sold alcohol and served alcohol and had a venue and had an entertainment license. And basically, how we did it was the Centre for Experimental Art and Communication was an art gallery and we got a special license. The police came several times and they'd go "This must be a speakeasy. We've never heard of this place. Let me see your license." And we would pull out the license and there it was. They could do nothing.

MRR: So you would get permits for each weekend

Paul: They were weekend permits for every Friday and Saturday night.

MRR: Now CEAC published a magazine. In issue #8 1977 they included the Raw War 7" single with yourselves and the Curse. Tell me about recording this.

John H: It was just a lark we did one afternoon in the basement because we wanted to do them a favor for letting us use the space.

Paul: We had all of our P.A. set up from the Crash 'n' Burn.

Ian: I think Dave Stone was the engineer.

John H: Dave Clarkson played bass. Ian went back to rhythm guitar. And I think we played E-chord for eight bars and then we would go up to the F-chord and do another eight bars and then go to F sharp.



MRR: This would have been one of the first punk rock singles ever. How many were made?

Paul: Probably 2000.

Ian: Do you think that many?

Paul: Maybe 500.

MRR: Tell me about Amerigo Maras and Bruce Eves.

Ian: Both nice guys. Politically motivated.

Paul: Marxists.

Ian: Very left wing in their orientation. Dedicated to performance art primarily. Both of them I believe are gay.

Paul: Heavily into gay politics, but the kind of gay politics going on in '76-'77 which was very different to the way things are today. They were complete outsiders culturally.

MRR: So you guys were friendly with the Curse. Tell me about the Curse.

John H: I'm not sure how we actually booked them, initially. I remember walking down the street to the Crash 'n' Burn one day and seeing their poster. I'm going, "Oh. This is a new band around," or something. I think Paul must have made the first connection with Mickey.

John C: I think it's before that, because the Curse were involved in the Raw War thing and the performance things in London. Those pre-date the Crash 'n' Burn.

Paul: They must have been done at one of those gigs like the Viletones at the Colonial Underground. I must have met them at the Colonial Underground, but Ralph's here.

MRR: Now Ralph, we are talking about the Curse and how the Diodes met the Curse.

Ralph: The Curse came with the Viletones show. The Viletones booked the Curse. Although, we booked the headliner, the headliner usually brought their own bands and they were responsible for the behavior of the opening acts. For example, we brought the Dents. The Viletones brought in the Curse. Teenage Head brought in Wheel Base. He was a hippie guy or something. And the Poles, I think we all left the club

when the Poles played. I went home to Montreal. John H: And they claimed that they didn't get a piece of the bar. They were whining the whole time.

Ralph: You see, the bands got 100 percent of the door, if I recall.

John H: Yeah, that's what it was and she wanted a cut of the bar and the stage wasn't big enough for her.

Ralph: Yeah, but they were from the bar band world.

Paul: Who played with the

Poles?

Ralph: That I don't know. I'd have to look at a poster. I wasn't there. The one show I did, I think I showed up at the end and there was nobody there. I remember I walked through the door and went, "Whoa. What's going on here? There is nobody here." I think everybody went to the Bev. Sorry Poles, although I do love Michael Jordana. She's nice.

MRR: So, the Poles were always kind of on the fringe. They weren't really part of the Viletones...

Ralph: They came out of the whole performance art thing. They were older. Doug Pringle used to be in that really cool band. When I was in high school there used to be a show on CTV called *Here Comes the '70s*, and it had the spectacular opening shot of this trio playing on a rock and a helicopter circled around them. Anyway, he was part of that group called Syrx and so they kind of joined the party a little late.

Paul: Michael Jordana was a Patti Smith wannabe, if I recall. I mean she was a good artist. Her paintings were amazing.

MRR: Apparently she is still producing art today.

Ralph: They were part of the scene but not part of the scene. Do you know what I mean? They didn't come up through our experiences. Basically, they were doing it anyway.

Paul: They asked me if they could play the Crash 'n' Burn and I said yes, because I had seen them at A Space, and I know that they were a good band, but it was a lot of Patti Smith-type ranting and screaming into the microphone. They weren't really part of us but they were there and they asked if they could play and I said yes.

To be continued in next issue!